

## A Note from the Elders

We want to thank you for all you are doing to carry out your ministry work during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is presenting challenges that we have not seen in our lifetimes. The disruption we're experiencing in everyday life is calling upon us to be even more creative, intentional and determined in our approach to ministry, and we appreciate the way our church family is rising to this occasion. While the methods we have historically used to carry out our mission are changing during this pandemic, and we need to follow certain guidelines for health and safety reasons, we are continuing to carry out our mission of *sharing God's love to transform people into fully devoted followers of Christ*. We are praying for you, this church family, and for all of our ministry efforts. We trust that God will help us through these challenges and provide new opportunities to serve Him, each other, and our community.

While much of the environment around us has changed, the timeless principles of God's word have not. We would ask that as you plan and participate in ministry activities during the pandemic, you keep in mind the spiritual principles that follow, which should underpin the planning and execution of our work during these unique circumstances. Each of the following passages of Scripture comes in a certain context, but these particular citations express principles and guidelines which should guide us as a church as we deal with the current distress.

### 1. We Will Point People to Jesus

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“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17)

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity”  
(Colossians 4:5)

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Jesus has dominion over all things on earth, and he is more powerful than all forces on earth, including the coronavirus. Through Jesus we are reconciled to God, and he is the head of the church. At each opportunity, we will use this time to teach the message of hope in Jesus, regardless of the meeting formats we must choose. We will point anxious, fearful, and hurting people to the gospel.

### 2. We Will Love our Neighbors by Protecting Their Health

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“Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31)

“In humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4)

“Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life” (Leviticus 19:16)

“Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God”  
(Leviticus 19:32)

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We will show love for one another during the pandemic by protecting each other's health in the same way we protect our own health, and that of our families. We will keep in mind not only the health and safety of

our own church family but also the impact that our decisions and actions will have on our community at large. As we know, our older members are especially at risk of complications if infected with COVID-19, and so we must show special consideration for those who are most vulnerable. **Because any interpersonal contact carries some level of risk**, we will use caution when planning and encouraging attendance at any gathering. The instructions in Leviticus 19, which are cited twice above, are rooted in Leviticus 19:18: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” This, the second great commandment, stands behind all we do in good times and bad.

### 3. We Will Be Good Citizens and Examples to Society

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“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors...” (1 Peter 2:13).

“...that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Timothy 2:2)

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We will respect both the *letter* and the *spirit* of the governmental ordinances and recommendations, and we will not seek reasons of personal or religious freedoms to contravene rules that are meant to keep us safe. We will remain obedient to God, and we will be a blessing to an anxiety-filled society by modeling good health practices and meeting needs of our community.

### 4. We Will Maintain Unity of the Spirit

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“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification”  
(Romans 14:19)

“So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other” (1 Corinthians 12:25)

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We will make every effort to maintain unity within the church and not leave any of our members behind. The social distancing guidelines that are required to prevent the spread of the coronavirus are separating us physically from one another, but we must not allow it to separate us spiritually. We will be intentional about finding ways to encourage, support and provide for the needs of the whole body of Christ. We will be thoughtful in providing accessible options for all members to participate in worship and to stay connected to the body.

### 5. We Will Not Confuse Mission with Method

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“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another...”(Hebrews 10:24-25)

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We can find creative ways to carry out the command to encourage one another without our traditional schedule of classes, worship, and activities. We will not assume we’re not carrying out our *mission* just because we can’t use our customary *methods*. Before we advocate the quick return of a previous meeting or activity, we will ask if we can accomplish its mission in other, creative and safe ways for a while.